



Application No.: 10/775,293

172

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the Application of:

Lawrence LeBouef

Serial No.: 10/775,293

Filed: February 10, 2004

For: TRAILER ASSISTANCE APPARATUS
AND METHOD OF USE

Attorney Docket No.: 026187.49785

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

Mail Stop: DD
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

The following documents for the above-captioned application are enclosed herewith:

1. Information Disclosure Statement;
2. Information Disclosure Citation (PTO-1449); and
3. Transmittal Letter.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,

Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens &
Cannada, PLLC

Date _____

May 17, 2004

By:

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INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
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Dear Sir:

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.56, 1.97 and 1.98, the attention of the Patent and Trademark Office is hereby directed to the references listed on the attached Form PTO-1449. A copy of each of the references listed on the attached form is submitted herewith.

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner consider the listed documents and indicate that it was considered by making appropriate notations on the attached form.

This submission does not represent that a search has been made or that no better art exists and does not constitute an admission that the listed documents are material or constitute "prior art." If the Examiner applies the document as prior art against any claim in the application and Applicant determines that the cited documents do not constitute "prior art" under United States law, Applicants reserve the right to present to the office the relevant facts and law regarding the appropriate status of such documents.

Applicant further reserves the right to take appropriate action to establish the patentability of the disclosed invention over the listed documents, should the documents be applied against the claims of the present application.

Document AA – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2003/0051654 discloses a device which provides the driver of a towing vehicle with a visual indication of the precise position and alignment of a towing vehicle's hitch ball (or other vehicle-side docking device) with the trailer's ball receiver (or other trailer-side docking device). Embodiments include an adjustable support for a position indicating device or "marker" which support attaches to the towing vehicle (in the bed of a pickup truck, for example) and can be adjusted whereby being marker or is positioned for indicating the point at which, when the trailer's receiver is juxtaposed thereto, the receiver and the vehicles docking device (usually a hitch ball) will be properly positioned and aligned for attachment.

Document BB – U.S. Patent No.: 3,818,599 discloses a sighting device consisting of two similar components which, when operatively applied, respectively, to the socket-carrying hitch arm of a trailer or other vehicle to be towed and the ball-carrying hitch arm of an automobile or other towing vehicle present sighting indicia or elements which are disposed at the same level above the ground and establish a plumb line which passes through the centers of the socket and ball of the coupling between the trailer and the automobile so that when a driver maneuvers the automobile in such a manner that the sighting elements contact each other, the socket and ball are in vertical alignment for hook-up or coupling purposes.

Document CC – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2003/0116938 discloses a vehicle tailgate step, wherein the step is pivotally mounted to the rear of a truck/vehicle, proximal the tailgate, and provides accessibility to the truck bed from the side of the truck when the tailgate is in the closed position, or from directly behind the truck, regardless of the tailgate position. Additionally, the device can be selectively manufactured to provide access to the contents of a truck bed from the side of the truck bed when the tailgate is in either a raised or lowered position.

Document DD – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2003/0094472 discloses a step or platform adapted to be mounted to the receiver of a trailer hitch selectively movable from a stowed to a deployed position without vertical movement, said platform is automatically locked in its selected position and includes a safety mechanism preventing inadvertent movement. The platform is separate from the mounting/control mechanism for storage and shipping, but secure and stable.

Document EE – U.S. Patent No.: 6,554,311 discloses an apparatus for providing a step at the back of a pickup truck if the truck has a receiver hitch for holding a receiver bar. The preferred apparatus has a support structure secured to the tongue of the receiver bar with the hitch ball and nut. A pivot plate and a tread plate are pivotally mounted to the support structure, providing the step when in the horizontal position and allowing access to the hitch ball when in the vertical position.

Document FF – U.S. Patent No.: 6,530,588 discloses a vehicle step apparatus for allowing a user easy access to pickup beds and sport utility vehicle cargo areas. The vehicle step apparatus includes a step support assembly that includes a mounting assembly that is designed to be coupled to the vehicle. A support member is slidably coupled to the mounting assembly such that a distal end of the support member is slidably positioned respect to the mounting assembly. A step support frame is coupled to the distal end of the support member such that the step support frame downwardly extends from the distal end of the support member. A step member is removably coupled to the step support frame opposite the support member. A step plate is coupled to a distal end of the step member such that the step plate is designed for supporting the weight of a user stepping into the vehicle.

Document GG – U.S. Patent No.: 6,511,086 discloses a foldable step assembly that is adjustably engageable with a trailer hitch receiver to achieve a variable horizontal clearance between a step plate and a rearward end of the receiver. The step plate is pivotally mounted to a step mount shank and is foldable from a horizontal use position to a vertical storage position. The step plate has a latch receiving recess, and there is a latch mechanism mounted on an upper part of the of a facing plate on the step mount shank. A brake light is mounted on the step plate to be visible when the step plate is in the vertical storage position.

Document HH – U.S. Patent No.: 6,474,688 discloses a steering arrangement, an arm is connected to a pivot shaft pivotally supported by a fixed steering column for a manual steering input at its inner end, and is connected to a steering wheel at its outer end while a display/control panel is fixedly attached to the steering column by a bracket extending axially from the steering column so as not to interfere with the arm. Thus, the display panel is placed centrally with respect to the steering wheel, but remains stationary even when the steering wheel is turned. The

vehicle operator can operate the control panel and/or the switch on the steering wheel without looking away from the display panel because all of them are placed close to each other and at a substantially same distance from the vehicle operator.

Document II – U.S. Patent No.: 6,237,927 discloses a pull out step which can be extended directly to the rear of a pickup truck makes it possible to step from the ground to the tread of the step and then to the tailgate of the truck. A bracket attached to a trailer hitch on the truck slidably supports a beam which supports the tread and allows the beam to be locked in either the extended or retracted positions. For use with trucks having an unusually high chassis, the beam may include a gooseneck to lower the elevation of the tread to approximately one half the elevation of the tailgate.

Document JJ – U.S. Patent No. 6,170,843 discloses a step holding member has a first end which is insertable into a receiver-type trailer hitch and a second end which is adapted for holding a step member for stepping onto the tailgate of a pickup truck. In another embodiment of the invention the step holding member telescopes in and out towards a side of a pickup truck allowing for easy storage when telescoped in. In a third embodiment the step holding member folds inwards from the pickup towards the trailer hitch for storage. A fourth embodiment is adapted for mounting directly onto a trailer hitch drawbar so that the hitch may be used for towing with the step in place for use.

Document KK – U.S. Patent No.: 5,803,475 discloses a receiver hitch step attachment mounts to the existing receiver hitch of a pickup truck and supports a set of steps that are adjustable laterally and vertically. An auxiliary stabilizer leg is provided for engaging the ground beneath the attachment when the truck is parked in order to support the vehicle against rocking when weight is applied to the steps or when moving about in the camper.

Document LL – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2003/0116075 discloses a device aiding in the interconnection of a trailer (10) of the so-called fifth wheel variety to complementary hitching apparatus (22) mounted to the bed of a towing vehicle (14), an alignment target (24) is removably positioned on the vehicle bed along the bed longitudinal axis via which the vehicle driver effects interconnection with maximum driving efficiency and minimal backing attempts.

Document MM – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2003/0047909 discloses a trailer hitch alignment hitch system uses height adjustable stanchions with length adjustable arms terminating in mirrors. The stanchions are respectively connectible to a tow vehicle and a trailer and placed so that the mirror is aligned vertically over the hitch connection component of the tow vehicle and the trailer and adjusted so that the respective mirrors are at different heights. The tow vehicle operator backs the tow vehicle until the mirrors visually indicate vertical alignment by one mirror coming into place below the other mirror and obstructing the view of the hitch component.

Document NN – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2003/0075899 discloses a hitch guide is a device to aid the driver of a pickup truck in mounting a gooseneck trailer hitch onto the hitch ball mounted in the bed of a pickup truck. the present device has a strap mounted between tow end pieces which in turn mount on the side rails of a pickup truck bed to that the end pieces may be moved along the length of the pickup truck bed for adjustment purposes. A marker, mounted on the strap, may be adjusted laterally between the two pickup bed rails. When the strap and marker are properly adjusted, the pickup truck when backed up to the mounting pole of a gooseneck trailer so that the marker is just touching the mounting pole will be oriented so that the mounting pole and gooseneck trailer hitch are aligned directly over the hitch ball in the pickup truck bed.

Document OO – U.S. Patent Application No.: 2002/0100175 discloses a trailer alignment apparatus for facilitating alignment of the ball coupler on a gooseneck trailer or a tongue-mounted coupling trailer with the hitch ball on a towing vehicle. In a first embodiment, the trailer alignment apparatus is designed for use with gooseneck trailers and mounts in the bed of a pickup truck and supports a pivoting alignment indicator over the hitch ball in the truck bed. As the pickup truck is backed toward the stationary gooseneck trailer, the alignment indicator eventually contacts the vertical gooseneck hitch post on the trailer and pivots from an angled to a vertical position to indicate to the pickup truck driver that the gooseneck-type ball coupler on the hitch post is in precise vertical alignment with the hitch ball. In a second embodiment, the trailer alignment apparatus is designed for use with tongue-mounted coupling trailers and is typically mounted on the rear bumper of a truck or other towing vehicle and extends rearwardly from the vehicle, such that the pivoting alignment indicator is positioned above the rearwardly-projecting hitch ball on the vehicle. A target device is mounted on the tongue of the trailer and extends

above the tongue-type ball coupler of the trailer for engaging and pivoting the alignment indicator as the towing vehicle is backed to a position where the coupler is disposed in direct overhead alignment with the hitch ball.

Document PP – U.S. Patent No.: 6,341,794 discloses a trailer hitch alignment apparatus comprises a first guide member removably attached to a vehicle bumper and a second guide member removably attached to a trailer hitch socket. The first guide member includes a magnetic base with a telescopically extensible rod adjustably coupled thereto. The second guide member includes a magnetic base having an upwardly extending telescopic rod and a downwardly extending semi-flexible shaft attached thereto. The shaft extends downwardly through a bore defined by the trailer hitch tongue so as to contact the trailer hitch ball when the ball and socket are aligned. Contact between the shaft and ball causes vertical displacement of the shaft and guide rod. Therefore, the two telescopic guide rods, visible from a driver's seat, facilitates lateral alignment of the ball and socket while vertical displacement of the second rod indicates perfect forward alignment.

Document QQ – U.S. Patent No.: 5,036,593 discloses a unitary trailer alignment guide for positioning a towing vehicle with respect to a trailer for connecting a trailer hitch includes a base, a telescoping upright member, a telescoping horizontal member joined at one end to the upper end of the upright member and rotatable through 270 degrees at the joint, and a vertical locator member at the forward end of the horizontal member, remote from the joint. In use, a trailer guide is mounted on a trailer. The lengths of the telescoping vertical and horizontal members are adjusted so that the vertical locator member will touch the towing vehicle when the trailer is aligned with the towing vehicle in position for connecting the trailer hitch.

Document RR – U.S. Patent No.: 3,889,384 discloses a guide to facilitate the hitching of a towing vehicle to a trailer. A pair of straight and rigid rods are each pivotally mounted atop a pair of housings having magnets therein. One of the magnetic housings is removably securable to the towing vehicle whereas the other magnetic housing is removably securable to a trailer. One of the rods has a ball received secured thereto whereas the second rod has a ball slidably mounted thereto. The ball has a plurality of ridges contacting the second rod.

Document SS – U.S. Patent No.: 5,738,362 discloses a step holding element is insertable

in a receiver-type trailer hitch on a vehicle and includes a mounting bar for securing into the trailer hitch receiver, and a step rotatably secured to the mounting bar for movement between open and closed positions. The mounting bar has an opening formed with a post mounted therein and the post has two ends, one of which is secured to the step and the other of which has a locking element secured thereto which is normally held in contact with the top surface and the side surfaces of the mounting bar. To operate the step between open and closed positions the step must be first pushed upwardly, away from the mounting bar and the ground on which the vehicle is resting, so that the locking element will be moved out of contact with the mounting bar to enable the step to be rotated between retracted and useable positions, with respect to the rear of the vehicle on which it is mounted.

Document TT – U.S. Patent No.: D343,153 discloses the ornamental design for a trailer alignment guide, as shown and described.

Document UU – “Gooseneck Hitches” by the Hitch Corner located at <http://www.hitchcorner.com/gooseneck-hitch.htm>.

Document VV – “Getting Hitched” by J. Martin Kohler located at <http://www.holidayrambler.com/holidays/archive/02julyaug/hitches.html>.

Document WW – Superior Trailers of Colorado Product Line located at <http://www.superiortrailer.com/trailprod.htm>.

In the event the Examiner has any questions regarding this document, please contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully Submitted,

Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens &
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May 17, 2004
Date

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Application No.: 10/775,293

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail, postage prepaid, on 5-17-04 in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop: DD, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

LORI L. WOOD

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE CITATION

(Use several sheets if necessary)

MAY 20 2004

Docket Number (Optional)

026187.49785

Application Number

10/775,293

Applicant(s)

Lawrence LeBouef

Filing Date

February 10, 2004

Group Art Unit

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

*EXAMINER INITIAL	DOCUMENT NUMBER	DATE	NAME	CLASS	SUBCLASS	FILING DATE IF APPROPRIATE
AA	2003/0051654	03/20/03	Jarosek, et al.	116/28	280/477	09/18/01
BB	3,818,599	06/25/74	Robert Tague	33/264	280/477	09/25/72
CC	2003/0116938	06/26/03	Shields, et al.	280/166		02/04/03
DD	2003/0094472	05/22/03	Knodle, et al.	224/509	224/519	11/07/02
EE	6,554,311	04/29/03	Blankenship, et al.	280/507	280/500	09/07/00
FF	6,530,588	03/11/03	Varney, et al.	280/166	280/163	02/02/01
GG	6,511,086	01/28/03	William Schlicht	280/166	280/163	01/26/01
HH	6,474,688	11/05/02	Bogren, et al.	280/771	74/552	10/11/00
II	6,237,927	05/29/01	Gregory Debo	280/166		06/10/99
JJ	6,170,843	01/09/01	Maxwell, et al.	280/166	182/91	07/21/99
KK	5,803,475	09/08/98	Edward Dick	280/163	280/164	08/13/96

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

REF	DOCUMENT NUMBER	DATE	COUNTRY	CLASS	SUBCLASS	Translation	
						YES	NO

OTHER DOCUMENTS (Including Author, Title, Date, Pertinent Pages, Etc.)

UU	"Gooseneck Hitches" the Hitch Corner
VV	"Getting Hitched" J. Martin Kohler

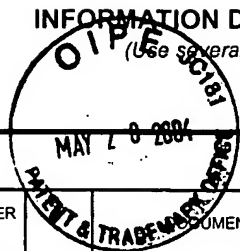
EXAMINER

DATE CONSIDERED

EXAMINER: Initial if citation considered, whether or not citation is in conformance with MPEP Section 609; Draw line through citation if not in conformance and not considered. Include copy of this form with next communication to applicant.

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE CITATION

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ATTY DOCKET NO.
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SERIAL NO.
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Lawrence LeBouef

FILING
February 10, 2004

GROUP

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

*EXAMINER INITIAL	DOCUMENT NUMBER	DATE	NAME	CLASS	SUBCLASS	FILING DATE IF APPROPRIATE
LL	2003/0116075	06/26/03	Jules Darras	116/28	33/264	12/26/01
MM	2003/0047909	03/13/03	Michael Alger	280/477	359/871	09/07/01
NN	2003/0075899	04/24/03	Maxwell, et al.	280/477		10/18/02
OO	2002/0100175	08/01/02	Clarence King	33/264	33/286	01/29/01
PP	6,341,794	01/29/02	Timothy Hunter	280/477	33/264	11/01/00
QQ	5,036,593	08/06/91	Vaughn Collier	33/264	116/28	05/04/90
RR	3,889,384	06/17/75	Max White	33/264	33/DIG	06/14/73
SS	5,738,362	04/14/98	Lanny Ludwick	280/166		07/02/96
TT	D343,153	01/11/94	Erickson, et al.	D12/162		05/06/91

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

	DOCUMENT NUMBER	DATE	COUNTRY	CLASS	SUBCLASS	TRANSLATION	
						YES	NO

OTHER DOCUMENTS (Including Author, Title, Date, Pertinent Pages, Etc.)

	ww	Superior Trailers of Colorado Product Line

EXAMINER	DATE CONSIDERED
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